THE MINISTER OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR) : (a) to (d) The 73rd and the 74th Constitution (Amendment) Acts have been enacted to make the local bodies as institutions of self-government with enabling provision of devolution of powers to them.

As a nodal Ministry for the implementation of the 73rd Constitution (Amendment) Act, the Ministry of Rural Development monitors the implementation of various provisions of this Act. States have been addressed at the highest level from time to time urging them to expedite action in regard to devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to PRIs in respect of subjects included in the XIth Schedule of the Constitution and also to take steps for implementing other provisions of the Amendment Act. Similarly, meetings at the Ministerial level have been held for the purpose from time to time. Training of elected representatives is also supported by the Ministry towards capacity building of Panchayati Raj Institutions to make the functioning of these institutions more effective.

As the nodal Ministry for the implementation of the 74th Constitution (Amendment) Act, the Ministry of Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation have taken various steps to make functioning of Urban Local Bodies more effective. Article 280 (of the Constitution) has been amended to make it obligatory for the Central Finance Commission to suggest measures needed for augmenting the finance of Municipalities based on the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions.

Criteria for awarding Swatantrata Sangram Senani (S.S.S.) pension

*392. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) the number of persons from Kerala who participated in the Punnapra-Vayalar struggle receiving S.S.S. pension;

(b) whether any applications stand rejected on the ground that the minimum imprisonment of six months before Independence was not completed;

(c) whether Government are aware that the struggle took place just before Independence and there is the least possibility for the participants to fulfil the above condition;

(d) whether Government propose to consider exempting the 'Imprisonment before Independence' clause as it would defeat the very purpose of recognition of above struggle for S.S.S. pension; and

(e) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI HARIN PATHAK) : (a) 16 persons, Sir.

(b) As per available information, no case has been rejected on this ground by the Union Government.

(c) The Punnapra Vayalar Struggle took place in 1946. Therefore Possibility exists of some of the participants to have completed minimum 6 months of imprisonment, before independence.

(d) and (e) The facts relating to the Punnapra Vayalar movement clearly show that it was a fight against the Princely State for its merger in India, within the Indian Union and such movements even after 15th August, 1947 are considered as a part of the national freedom movement for the purpose of grant of pension under the Swatantrata Sainik Samman Pension Scheme. Therefore, no exemption is needed.

Transfer of Divisional Organiser's Office of SSB outside Uttaranchal

†*393. SHRI HARISH RAWAT : Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether office of Divisional Organiser of SSB situated in the bordering State, Uttaranchal has been transferred from there and presence of SSB has been reduced in the region;

(b) if so, whether the decision has been taken after the assessment of situation arising out of the increasing activities of Maoist and ISI in the Nepal region; and

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.